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GENERAL REPORT

ON THE

COUNTRY ROUND NANAIMO.

COL. SEC. OFFICE,
Victoria, 30th March 1860.

The accompanying Report upon the Country round the District of Nanaimo is herewith published for general information.

By Command of His Excellency the Governor,
WILLIAM A. G. YOUNG.
Acting Colonial Secretary.

GENERAL REPORT ON THE COUNTRY ROUND NANAIMO.

July 11th, 1859.

To Joseph Despard Pemberton, Esq., Colonial Surveyor, &c.

SIR,—I have the honor to report for your information some observations made whilst engaged in the survey round Nanaimo, comprising the Mountain, Cedar, and Cranberry Districts

These Districts are situated immediately around and abutting upon the Nanaimo District, which is bounded on the East by Nanaimo Harbor, and has a large mining town containing about 200 inhabitants, chiefly laborers at work in the Coal mines, who afford a ready market for all kinds of farm produce. The Harbor is of large size and well sheltered at all points from wind, with good anchorage and every natural advantage. The distance from Victoria is about 70 miles, and the average passage for 18 months of a Schooner of 20 tons, trading between the two places, was two days, which included her discharge and loading at either place. Fish, chiefly salmon, are very abundant in the harbor and up the Nanaimo, or Quam-quam-qua River. In the fall of the year the salmon ascend the river in large shoals, where they may be readily speared, or shot, or caught in nets, in any quantity; they are very rich and fat, and equal in all respects to the finest salmon of England. Halibut and cod are caught on the sandbanks not far from Nanaimo.

MOUNTAIN DISTRICT.

The general character of this District is broken, and undulating, but often perfectly flat, especially up the

river Millstone, and about Diver Lake, where the timber is for the most part open, and the fern, which is of three distinct kinds, grows to an unusual height.

The timber is chiefly pine, of the species known as Douglas white, with some spruce, and is generally of large size; occasional patches of Sallal, (which bears an exceedingly nice berry) and poor ground occur, but they are the exception. The mean height would probably be 60 or 70 feet above the sea. The richest land, however, lies along the banks of the Millstone river, which winds for the greater part through pretty plains covered with rich fern and grass, and at an average distance of a quarter mile to the north is a continuous bluff from 70 feet to 120 feet in height, and sloping gradually from the top to the N. East. The greater part of this District is occupied by Wake-siah, or, according to the Indians, Tai-took-tan mountain, which is only remarkable for the fine quality, and large growth of the timber at the base of it.

This District is well watered by fine streams, some of them being tributaries of the Millstone, and everywhere are indications of water obtainable by sinking wells.

It was not thought advisable to survey the South-eastern part of this District, as the soil is poor and stony, and little fitted for agricultural purposes, but the grazing is excellent, and the timber, both large and small, of the best possible quality; trees adapted either for spars or fence poles, being abundant even a considerable distance up the spur of the above mentioned mountain, which is probably 1,100 feet above the level of the Sea.

There is every probability that the South-east part of this District, though unfitted for any purpose but grazing, is rich in coal, as the coal crops out in a seam 72 inches thick on Chase river, a distance of only a quarter of a mile from the eastern boundary of the District, and this assumption is strengthened by the broken and "faulty" appearance of the surrounding country.

The whole District contains 16,000 acres, and is bounded on the East by the Nanaimo District, and on the South-east by the Cranberry District. It is distant from Colvilletown, in the Nanaimo District, one and a half miles, to which there is an excellent wagon road.

The North-eastern part of the District is accessible by Exit passage from Nanaimo Harbor, being only a quarter of a mile inland.

The climate very nearly resembles that of Victoria the general character of the summer being warm, with little or no rain, but heavy dews, and that of the winter mild, with an average of, perhaps, ten days snow the frosts, though not severe, are of longer continuance Rain falls in large quantities in the spring of the year and it is generally thought that the average fall exceeds that of England. No fevers or epidemics of any kind are known among the white population. The Indians though numerous are perfectly peaceful, and are made use of by the whites as plowmen, servants, voyagers, in fact, laborers of all kinds of work. Their pay and rations amount to little, and if kindly treated and properly superintended, the results of their labor are profitable to the employer.

Game is abundant, consisting of elk, deer, bear, grouse, partridge, wild fowl, crane, and pigeon.

CRANBERRY DISTRICT.

This District contains about 15,500 acres, and is bounded on the North by Nanaimo District, and on the East by the Cedar District, and to the North is within a quarter of a mile of the Head of Nanaimo Harbor, and through it flows nearly the whole navigable portion of the Nanaimo, or Quam-quam-qua river.

A large proportion of the N. W. part is fitted only for grazing purposes, as the soil is very shallow, and rests on the sandstone rock, many of the bottoms, however, are fertile and produce rich vegetation. The same applies to the S. W. and West parts.

This District takes its name from the berry, which is abundant in the swamps and around the Lakes, and is an article of export to California and the Sandwich Islands.

The North-easterly and Easterly parts, lying along the banks of the Nanaimo river are those best suited for farming purpose.

The soil is sandy, but covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, fern, wild fruit bushes, and trees, among which may be noted the crab apple, and cherry, are everywhere found. The woods are for the most part open, and free from brush and fallen timber, and present quite a tropical appearance.

The principal timber is the Cedar, pine, maple, and poplar, all of which grow to a gigantic size, the pines rising to the height of 100 feet without a branch, and having many distinct and separate tops, the branches of the cedar grow to the very ground. Some of these trees measured 27 feet in circumference, and are perfectly sound. The maple and poplar trees are very tall and straight, and average 10 feet in circumference.

The banks are low, and accessible to boats and canoes, and for a distance of 60 yards on either side, there are indications of floods; the banks occasionally rise to a

height of 25 feet above the level of the river. The river is navigable for about 9 miles for flat bottomed boats, and canoes of a light draught of water, with perfect safety; the current is rapid, and always descending, the tide running in but a short distance, even at springs, which, however, always back up, and consequently increase the depth of water in the river, for a distance of about 5 miles from the mouth. Much improvement in the depth of water, and diminution of the force of the current might be effected by the judicious outlay of a small sum of money in removing the fallen trees and drift wood, which not only form shoals in the river, but actually choke up the channel in places, rendering the navigation both difficult and dangerous.

The melting of the snow likewise affect the river generally during the night; the greatest rise, however, observed from this cause, was one foot in a night. The river appears to offer considerable advantages to the settler for floating down spars, one cargo of which would more than pay the price of the land, as well as a highway for sending his produce to market.

Some excellent prospects, or in mining phraseology, "color," were obtained along the banks of the river at many points, particularly about 6 miles from the mouth.

DELTA PLAINS.

These plains contain about 900 or 1,000 acres; the south portion consists of rich vegetable soil of a great depth, with a subsoil of muddy clay or loam, the deposit of ages. The north portion is apparently subject at long intervals to floods, but is, nevertheless, admirably suited for a stock or grazing farm, or rather farms, bearing a long rich grass, which the Indians annually cut and sell to the settlers at Colviletown.

CEDAR DISTRICT.

Cedar District contains about 11,000 acres. It is bounded on the north by Northumberland channel, on the east by the Harro strait, and on the west by Cranberry District.

Nearly the whole of this District, except the extreme northern and southern sections, is available for cultivation, with little labor; the northeastern part on the strait, is composed of open land, with a few scattering pines and maple. The soil is very fertile, and of a good depth, with a clay subsoil, and abounds in springs of beautiful water, especially along the coast, which are probably caused by the drainage from the large lakes in the interior. These lakes, with the exception of the Trois-bras, have no visible outlet.

This lake is beautifully situated in a large natural basin; its borders are open, and gradually sloping to the waters edge, presenting everywhere fine sites for building. The southeastern part of this District is also filled with large lakes, though the land generally is poor or rocky around them; but the pine cedar and maple timber is all of the largest and finest kind. The lakes are perfectly full of trout, and the surrounding country abound with all kinds of game before mentioned.

In the south west corner of the district, are two small plains of the richest possible description, the northern one is beautifully situated on a small rapid river, which falls into the Nanaimo river about half a mile below, just opposite the old fishery station of the Indians.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient Servt,

B. W. PEARSE.

Land Office, Victoria, V. I., }
June 11th, 1859.

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